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VISCLOSKY RECOGNIZES GEORGE THIEL

Mr. Speaker: It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to recognize one of Northwest Indiana's most dedicated and selfless citizens, Mr. George Thiel, of Griffith, Indiana. After serving the people of Griffith as a firefighter for sixty years, the last twenty-nine of which he served as the department's Fire Chief, George retired from service at the beginning of 2012. In recognition of Mr. Thiel's service to his community, not only as a firefighter but also for his commitment to serving his community in many other capacities, a party was held in his honor on Sunday, January 8, 2012.

George was born March 20, 1926, in Saint John, Indiana, and learned the meaning of dedication and hard work on his family's farm. To this day, George still enjoys farming. After graduating from Dyer Central High School, George entered the Army, where he was quickly promoted to Sergeant for the 99th Infantry Division. During his military service, he participated in the Battle of the Bulge and earned a Purple Heart Medal. George was honorably discharged from the Army in 1945 and began his first career as a home builder, retiring from that position in 1990. Shortly after beginning his first career, George found his true love and married Peggy Vestal in 1951. He then found his other true love and joined the Griffith Fire Department in 1952. George and Peggy were blessed to have three children: Mike, Larry, and Sandy, who have given them six wonderful grandchildren. George remained dedicated to his family and his career and was promoted to Fire Chief in 1983, a post he retained until his retirement.

Of all the awards and highlights of a sixty-year firefighting career, George can be most proud of the public educational work he has accomplished and the countless lives he has saved. George has saved many lives simply through his initiative to provide Griffith residents with smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire extinguishers at no cost to the resident. Additionally, George has passed on much of his knowledge and expertise to so many firefighters that Griffith will benefit for generations to come.

Aside from his incredible sixty years of service on the fire department, George's contributions to the Northwest Indiana community extend to numerous youth organizations that were fortunate to have George's coaching and mentoring skills. George continues to enjoy volunteering and watching all Griffith High School football and basketball games. George also remains an instrumental teacher to the people of Griffith by sharing his knowledge of the rich tradition and history of the town.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and my other distinguished colleagues join me in commending Mr. George Thiel for his lifetime of leadership, service, and dedication to the residents of Griffith, Indiana. He has touched the lives of countless citizens, and his commitment to the safety of his community and to the improvement of the quality of life for the people of Griffith is to be admired.